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Maxwell's Demon

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Abstract

"By dint of his prodigious intelligence and dexterity, the goblin could cause things to happen that are never seen to occur in nature, things that seemed able to violate the second law of thermodynamics."

-Hans Christian Von Baeyer

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Maxwell's Demon

A Poem by Elizabeth Hazen

"By dint of his prodigious intelligence and dexterity, the goblin could cause things to happen that are never seen to occur in nature, things that seemed able to violate the second law of thermodynamics."

-Hans Christian Von Baeyer

Maxwell's Demon, diminutive imp, you spit
on the law of entropy through the fork in your thick,
black tongue. You claw open trapdoors of closed systems,
let heat pass through, shut out the cold. Your lies
could keep my coffee hot all day. You want
to hold the hands of the clock steady, hold
gravity in check, un-sag my skin, change

the nature of my longing, but even you
cannot exist without consequence: your gaze
alone alters everything you see. Like mine,

your presence interferes, unbalances, warps:
rubbernecking backs traffic up for miles, slows
the ambulance's progress, causes fender benders,
arguments, missed appointments, backseat births.

My weeping can't reverse a bullet, but
my limbic system shifts; the scent of day-old
lilies fills me, henceforth, with a sense of dread.
Darling liar, you promise endless heat,
backwards motion, do-overs. This time I know
exactly what to say. I *will* pick up
the phone this time. This time I'll tell him, *Wait*.

Elizabeth Hazen's poems have appeared in *Southwest Review*, *The Threepenny Review*, *Salamander*, and other journals. She lives in Baltimore.

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